

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed October 2, 2008, has been received and its contents carefully noted. The pending claims, claims 1-7, were rejected. By this Response, claims 1-7 have been amended. Support may be found in the specification and the claims as originally filed. See, for example, page 11, line 32 to page 12, line 5 and page 5, lines 27-30. No statutory new matter has been added. Therefore, reconsideration and entry of the claims, as amended, are respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph

The Examiner rejected claims 5-7 under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Examiner deemed that the recitations "one space" and "the other space" in claims 5-7 render the claim vague and indefinite. The Examiner also deemed that the expression "in order to leisurely reduce..." in these claims renders them vague and indefinite because the term "leisurely" is ambiguous and subjective.

Applicants respectfully urge that the claims, as amended, are clear and definite and the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, should be withdrawn.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claims 1 and 3/1 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Matsushima (JP 2000-150613) in view of Tokunaga (US 20030031537). Specifically, the Examiner deemed that it would have been obvious to include a gas-discharging mechanism that discharges gas and dust in order to remove such from around the articles to be processed. The Examiner rejected claims 2 and 3/2 as being unpatentable over Matsushima in view of Tokunaga and in view of Otaguro (JP 2002-170860). Claim 4 was rejected as being unpatentable over Matsushima, Tokunaga and Otaguro in view of Osada (JP 2002-357271). Lastly, the Examiner rejected claims 5-7 as being unpatentable over Matsushima, Tokunaga and Otaguro in view of Iwai (JP 6-302679). Each of these rejections is traversed.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited documents do not teach or suggest the present invention as now claimed. Specifically, according to claim 1, the lid opening-and-closing

mechanism is defined as horizontally movable. That is, with respect to Applicants' exemplary, preferred embodiments, opening-and-closing mechanism (75), which is provided inside the door (71), is horizontally movable. To the contrary, Tokunaga's door (20) is taught as moving vertically. Hence, to those of ordinary skill in the art, Matsushima and Tokunaga teach a gas-discharging mechanism (48) arranged for area (40) in which the door (20) is vertically movable. Otaguro, Osada and Iwai, alone or in combination, do not alleviate these deficiencies of Matsushima and Tokunaga. None of the cited documents teaches or suggests Applicants' recited structure resulting in horizontal movement of the lid opening-and-closing mechanism.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully urge that the claims, as amended, are unobvious and the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) should be withdrawn.

Request for Interview

Applicants respectfully request either a telephonic or an in-person interview should there be any remaining issues.

CONCLUSION

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action and, as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number provided.

It is not believed that extensions of time are required, beyond those that may otherwise be provided for in accompanying documents. However, in the event that additional extensions of time are necessary to prevent abandonment of this application, then such extensions of time are hereby petitioned under 37 C.F.R. 1.136(a), and any fees required therefor are hereby authorized to be charged to **Deposit Account No. 02-4300, Attorney Docket No. 033082 M 294**.

Respectfully submitted,
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